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Working Group I
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Compilation of views of Governments on the conservation of biological diversity

INTRODUCTION

1. This document is a compilation of views on the conservation of biological diversity submitted to the Secretariat after the third session of the Preparatory Committee. At the request of the Preparatory Committee it has been prepared as part of the input into the discussions on the Agenda 21 options for the conservation of biological diversity at the fourth session.

Netherlands

2. A/CONF.151/PC/42/Add.4: Paragraphs 6 (a), 8 and 11 (a) impart a weaker formulation, by stating that climate change could contribute to environmental degradation in general. The precautionary principle should be applied.

3. A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.28, paragraph 14 (f): The new subparagraph 14 (f) should be amended to be "... protection and sustainable use of identified elements ...". The Netherlands Government goes on to say that the establishment of biogeographic provinces is also part of the negotiations on a framework convention on biodiversity.

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* See A/CONF.151/PC/96.

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4. A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.28, paragraph 22 (i): If "established" is deleted, then the "new" before mechanisms should be placed in brackets.

5. A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.28, paragraph 30 (g): The last part of this subparagraph should read "... existing networks of ex situ conservation including gene banks in developed and developing countries."

6. The summary of the discussion (Part I) of A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.28 is very good. The only objection is that there is too much emphasis on ex situ conservation in comparison with the relationship which the European Community advocates between in situ and ex situ conservation. The tendency to place increased emphasis on ex situ conservation is also apparent from a number of operational amendments to Part II (amendments to paras. 19, 24, 30 (g) and 34 (i)). These amendments do not present genuinely inseparable difficulties in our eyes, but reference should be made to paragraph 6 (c) for a correct summary of the discussion.

7. Another noteworthy point in Part II is that, pending the cost estimates for the programmes which will undoubtedly be higher than anticipated (due to the proposed additions), heavy emphasis is placed on the income side (both funds and revenues) with regard to developing countries. In particular, the repetition of the reference to General Assembly resolution 44.228, section I, paragraphs 15 (j) and (k), in the context of the transfer of technologies seems excessive, particularly in view of the fact that this resolution is the basis for everything UNCED is now doing.

8. The weakening of the phraseology concerning the possible consequences of climate change is also remarkable (paras. 6, 8 and 11 (a)). Perhaps greater emphasis could be placed on the precautionary principle.

Malaysia

9. Malaysia would like to emphasize again that under Programme Area C: Improve the Conservation of Biological Resources, it should also include the formulation of norms and criteria for the establishment of internationally agreed biogeographic areas for the conservation of biological diversity within national jurisdiction, including the quantification of costs and the identification of sources of funds needed to manage and conserve these agreed biogeographic areas.

Tunisia

10. The following points should be added in document A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.28:

(a) Programme Area A: Provide information on biodiversity:

"Improve knowledge of biodiversity in the various countries and set up data banks on the subject";

(b) Programme Area B:

"Emphasize here the possible means of conservation and beneficial development of available spontaneous biological resources";

(c) Programme Area C:

"Emphasize the conservation and preservation of indigenous natural fauna and flora biological resources by establishing gene banks for some of these resources and promoting research to improve some of them.

"Take juridical and legal steps to protect biodiversity and genetic resources against attempts to transform or degrade the original genetic characteristics".

Venezuela

11. The Government of Venezuela proposes the addition of the following programme areas:

A. Programme for the conservation and sustainable management of woodland and water fauna (zoodiversity)

Basis for action

12. A great many species of woodland and water fauna are in danger of extinction and many will definitely have become extinct by the end of the century. This situation is attributable in part to the overexploitation, degradation and potential destruction of their habitats and to socio-cultural factors, in particular, inadequate conservation policies in such areas as planning, legislation and institutions.

13. In addition to the role played by animal species in the basic ecological processes essential to the survival of life on Earth, zoodiversity has fundamental value as a resource for sustainable development and for improving the quality of life. It is in this context that we can argue for the basic principle of the sustainable use of animal resources to guarantee the conservation of biodiversity: it is their beneficial scientific, economic and social development that will help to safeguard them for present and future generations.

Objectives

14. This programme has the following objectives:

(a) To promote a global, regional and national strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of zoodiversity;

(b) To set up and strengthen a system of research into zoodiversity and the sustainable use of animal resources, in order to support the creation and administration of management, protection and preservation areas;

(c) To strengthen the international and national institutions responsible for biodiversity conservation programmes;

(d) To promote community participation, in programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of animal resources, especially participation by the communities that use such resources.

Activities

15. The programme should include the following activities:

(a) Formulating global, regional and national plans for the conservation and sustainable management of woodland and water resources, so that all endangered species are covered by such plans by the year 2000;

(b) Increasing by approximately 20 per cent between now and the year 2000 protected areas specially designed for zoodiversity conservation;

(c) Establishing a world fund to finance research and education on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of animal resources, including their beneficial economic development;

(d) Promoting the training of human resources for research on zoodiversity conservation and for the management of woodland and water fauna resources;

(e) Promoting governmental and non-governmental awareness of the environmental and socio-economic importance of conserving woodland and water fauna resources.

B. Programme for the conservation of the biodiversity of savannah ecosystems

Basis for action

16. Savannahs are in some cases considered to be a phase in the degradation of woods, with little economic value and very little potential for sustaining human activities. However, this perception of savannahs is changing and their ecological significance is being given increasing weight. In the neo-tropical region alone, some 300 million hectares are savannah and yet savannah areas - unlike woodlands - enjoy little or no legal protection. It is estimated that only 2 per cent of savannahs are protected by national parks or other special areas.

17. There is a serious dearth of knowledge about biological diversity and its potential for the sustainable use of the savannah ecosystems of the neo-tropics, where a considerable part of the developing world is situated. There is a global, regional and national need to preserve the ecological integrity of savannah ecosystems. Not enough is known about the role of the savannah as a habitat for numerous species of woodland fauna or about the diversity of plant species to be found there, giving rise to a diversity of savannah ecosystems.

Objectives

18. This programme has the following objectives:

(a) To promote international activities aimed at conserving and protecting the world's savannah ecosystems through beneficial development and sustainable use;

(b) To set up and expand a system of protected savannah areas;

(c) To promote basic research into the biodiversity of savannahs to guide their sustainable use;

(d) To create global, regional and national awareness of the ecological and environmental significance of these ecosystems.

Activities

19. The programme should include the following activities:

(a) Expanding protected savannah areas so that at least 10 per cent of the total area of these ecosystems is legally protected by the year 2000;

(b) Formulating management and conservation plans for protected savannahs and instituting monitoring and supervision mechanisms, so that all protected areas are covered by such plans by the year 2005;

(c) Establishing regional and national research programmes on savannah biodiversity while strengthening the international and national institutions that promote such programmes;

(d) Promoting mechanisms for community participation in the conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity of savannah ecosystems;

(e) Increasing public and government awareness of the importance of savannahs both for their biological diversity and for their general ecological role.

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ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND MANAGEMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

Compilation of views of Governments on the environmentally sound management of biotechnology

1. This document is a compilation of views on the environmentally sound management of biotechnology submitted to the secretariat after the third session of the Preparatory Committee. At the request of the Preparatory Committee it has been prepared as part of the input into the discussions on the Agenda 21 options for the environmentally sound management of biotechnology at the fourth session.

Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela

2. See A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.26. 1/

India

3. With reference to document A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.30:

(a) Paragraphs 6 (e) and 30 (b): reference to a biotechnology consortium or corporation for development should be put in brackets and the following added: "or intergovernmental body";

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* See A/CONF.151/PC/96.

(b) Paragraph 11 (a): replace "in combination with" by "to enhance";

(c) Paragraph 11 (e): add "and applications in agriculture and health";

(d) Paragraph 22, line 2: after "population growth", add "and life consumption patterns";

(e) Paragraph 31 (e): add "and sharing of profits of biotechnology products";

(f) Paragraph 31 (d): replace "benefits" with "profits".

Venezuela

4. The Government of Venezuela proposes the addition of the following programme area:

"BIOTECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE"

Basis for action

5. Paragraph 8 of the English version of document A/CONF.151/PC/42/Add.5 is acceptable.

Objectives

6. The aim of this programme is to help increase and improve the productivity of agricultural systems through the use of biotechnology applications in the conservation and use of germ plasm for agricultural purposes, the improvement of plant and animal species of use for meeting human needs, the development of environmentally sound farming practices and the improvement of the quality of the environment in rural areas.

7. The specific objectives include:

(a) To help increase and improve the productivity of the main usable plant and animal species in developing regions;

(b) To help conserve genetic forestry resources that might be used in programmes to domesticate and improve new biological species of use to human beings;

(c) To design and develop agricultural practices that gradually phase out the use of toxic products (pesticides and others) and make for more efficient management of plant and domestic animal nutrition.

Activities

8. The proposed activities are as follows:

(a) To promote the integration of "appropriate" technologies and conventional and advanced technologies (biotechnologies) in order to develop genetically modified plants that are more productive and resistant to or tolerant of biotic and abiotic stresses;

(b) To promote the integration of appropriate technologies, conventional technologies and advanced techniques in reproduction and health biotechnology to accelerate the improvement of animal stocks for specific needs;

(c) To encourage a more rapid introduction of biotechnology applications to conserve endangered genetic forestry resources that are potentially useful for producing food and fibres;

(d) To set up and strengthen national and regional centres for the conservation of genetic resources for sustainable agriculture;

(e) To develop and use biotechnologies to replace environmentally unsound pesticides and chemical fertilizers by environmentally sound alternatives, including improved nitrogen fixation efficiency in legumes and grasses, and phosphorus uptake efficiency;

(f) To formulate and carry out an accelerated training programme for biotechnology researchers in animal and plant agriculture within the next few years;

(g) To promote technology transfer mechanisms in biotechnology, based on the principles of fairness, the great biological diversity of developing countries and the intellectual property rights of local farmers.

Notes

1/ A revised version of the document (A/CONF.151/PC/WG.I/L.28*) will be before the Preparatory Committee at its fourth session.

ANNEX

Letter dated 4 September 1991 from the Head of the Delegation of Venezuela addressed to the Secretary-General of the Conference

Since 1981, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has been operating the International Centre of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) under its own auspices as a project, which will very shortly take final form. The Ambassador of Venezuela to France, Mr. Adolfo R. Taylhardat, presides over the Preparatory Committee for the establishment of the Centre and has informed us that he has submitted a document to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development outlining the role the Centre might play in promoting sustainable development. Document A/CONF.151/PC/66 mentions ICGEB in paragraph 35.

In view of the fact that this Centre could be a basic channel for North-South cooperation, it would be desirable to include it among the instruments envisaged in Agenda 21. If you are of the same opinion, we should be very grateful if you would give instructions for it to be considered in the most appropriate forum.

(Signed) Arnoldo José GABALDON
Head of the Delegation of Venezuela